PO 101 L4 Purpose and Limits of Government

Circling Back to Game 1

1. OK What does this game assume about the players? - Players will only cooperate if it aligns with their self-interest.
   When will cooperation occur? - Cooperation is unlikely if the other player is a stranger, as the assumption ignores altruism or helping strangers.

- Will only cooperate if it is in one's self-interest
  - Is this reasonable if the other player is a stranger? - It assumes economic interactions with strangers are self-interested, focusing on minimizing costs and maximizing gains.
    - Ignores people who help strangers
    - Most of our economic situation with strangers, though, are self-interested (e.g., minimize cost, maximize gain)

2. Impact of the facts of the game

- How could we change the facts of the game to make the players more likely to contribute? I did so by requiring taxes, but can we do something else? - Create bonds through friendship or shared national identity to encourage norms of reciprocity and generosity.
  For instance: Encouraging contributions based on patriotic values (e.g., "helping out fellow Americans or South Carolinians").
  Use mechanisms beyond taxes, like social recognition or rewards, to motivate cooperation.
  - Bonded by friendship or national identification. This can facilitate norms of reciprocity and generosity (e.g., I'll help out my fellow Americans or South Carolinians and contribute to the road).

3. How did Christianity influence the U.S. Constitution? - Christianity influenced the U.S. Constitution through its emphasis on moral values, natural law, and human dignity, shaping ideas of justice, liberty, and rights. It also inspired the principle of separating church and state to ensure religious freedom while avoiding religious conflicts.

- Which statements would be consistent with traditional U.S. civil religion, and which wouldn't? – (consistent) References to God in public speeches and documents (e.g., "In God We Trust").
  (Inconsistent) - Sectarian or exclusive religious language that prioritizes one denomination or faith.
- According to Dr. Black, should we focus more on civil religion or political theology? - Dr. Black argues that **political theology** should take precedence over civil religion. While civil religion offers a general moral framework, political theology provides a deeper, more

grounded application of faith principles to political decision-making and public life.

- Please be able to distinguish Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed political theology - **Catholic political theology**: Emphasizes the role of natural law and the common good.
  Views government as a means to achieve justice and order, rooted in divine principles.
  Lutheran political theology:
  Focuses on the doctrine of the "Two Kingdoms," distinguishing between the spiritual realm (church) and the secular realm (government).
  Advocates for limited overlap between religion and politics.
  Reformed political theology:
  Highlights the sovereignty of God over all aspects of life, including governance.
  Encourages active Christian engagement in politics to promote justice and moral order.

- What is an easy issue, and what is a hard issue? What would be an example of each? - **Easy issue**: A moral or political question with clear biblical guidance or consensus.
  Example: Opposing theft or murder, as they directly violate biblical commandments.
  Hard issue:
  A moral or political question where biblical guidance is less explicit, and opinions may vary among Christians.
  Example: Policies on healthcare or economic reform, which require balancing competing values and practical considerations.

  News article: Why is the Trump administration challenging the constitutionality of birthright citizenship for the children of immigrants? - The Trump administration argued that the **14th Amendment**'s guarantee of citizenship for those born on U.S. soil should not extend to children of undocumented immigrants. They contended that the amendment was originally intended to apply to former slaves and their descendants, not to individuals lacking legal status.

Takeaways

Democracy: accountability between the public and politicians (e.g., citizens voting an incumbent, such as former President Trump, out of office in 2020; it will be interesting to see whether President Biden also loses re-election)

- Democracy can promote effective but limited government (politicians don't want to rob us of our rights; they want to earn our vote through effective management of the government and economy)

Federalism: the division of power across levels of government, with some powers shared across levels and others reserved for particular levels

- Shared: tax
- Reserved: local-level public safety

Separation of powers: the allocation of legislative, executive, and judicial authority to distinct branches of government, to prevent one branch from becoming too powerful. The Constitution vests primary lawmaking authority to Congress, primary executive authority to the president, and primary judicial authority to the Supreme Court and lower federal courts. But each branch also is able to hold the other two accountable through checks and balances.

Checks and balances: rules in the Constitution allowing one branch of government to check the power of another branch, thus promoting balance of power

- Goal: undermine tyranny
- List
    - The president can check Congress by vetoing legislation
    - The president can check the judicial branch by nominating federal judges
    - Congress can check the president by ignoring the president's pleas for legislation or passing its own version of legislation
    - Congress can check the president by overriding a presidential veto
    - Congress check the president by rejecting cabinet appointments and court nominees
    - Congress can check the president by impeaching and removing the president
    - Congress can check the president by proposing amendments to the Constitution that reduce the president's power (e.g., term limits in the 22nd Amendment)
    - The Senate can check the president by delaying court nominations
    - The Senate can check the judicial branch by rejecting court nominations
    - The judicial branch can check Congress by declaring laws unconstitutional

    - The judicial branch can check the president by declaring executive actions to be unconstitutional
- Example: The Supreme Court's decision on TikTok

Other Key Concepts from This Lecture

Public goods: goods and services from the government that are available to everyone

- Contrast with private goods such as groceries, which are available for private consumption

Collective action problem: letting others pay the cost for a collective benefit

- You could sit home and let others vote for your preferred candidate or party. If you're a Republican in a strongly Republican state such as South Carolina or a Democrat is a heavily Democratic state such as New York, this may be an especially tempting option since you benefit in terms of policymaking and representation without paying the cost of going to the polls
- However, government can change incentives and help to solve the collective action problem. Australia, for example, fines people who don't vote (if they lack a good reason for not going to the polls)